



Dealing with Parental Complaints

1. Aims

Hillcross Primary School aims to establish and promote a close relationship with all parents and guardians, in the interests of the children. We recognise that children will feel more secure when they receive consistent messages from both home and school. Your views about our school are welcomed, including the expression of any serious concerns. At the same time we undertake to inform you as soon as possible about any issues of concern to the school so that we can work together to resolve them.

1.1 What we do to avoid concerns arising

- At Hillcross we work closely with parents in order to keep you informed of all aspects of school life. We have:
 - an open door policy
 - individual school planners which include a home school agreement
 - a regular newsletter from the Headteacher
 - the text service
 - the website
 - parent notice board in the playground
 - regular parents' evenings
 - a written report for parents/guardians about your child once a year
- We do recognise however that from time to time you may have a concern that you wish to raise with the school.
- At Hillcross we are committed to responding to a parental concern as quickly and as sensitively as possible in order to resolve the issue promptly and will do so in line with this procedure.

1.2 How we plan to improve our practice

- We keep a record of all complaints so that we are informed about:
 - the nature of complaints
 - the time taken to resolve each complaint
 - the measures adopted to resolve each complaint
- The headteacher and senior staff will review this record on a regular basis, to enable consideration to be given to any underlying issues which need to be addressed by the school and the governing body.

2. Stages in the Procedure

- Hillcross is committed to:
 - dealing with your concern as quickly as possible in an impartial and non-adversarial way;
 - making sure that all your concerns are considered and that a fair investigation is undertaken when necessary;
 - keeping you informed of the progress of your concern;
 - Maintaining confidentiality at all times.

Stage 1: Discussion with class teacher

- It is our view that it is in everyone's interest that any concerns are resolved at the earliest opportunity by a meeting with your child's class teacher.
- We find that most issues can be satisfactorily addressed this way.
- Class teachers are available to meet parents/guardians, by appointment, at the beginning and end of school days.

Stage 2: Discussion with the Phase Leader

- If you feel that stage 1 has not adequately addressed your concern, or, if for whatever reason, you do not wish to discuss your complaint with the class teacher, you can make an appointment to meet with the relevant phase leader (Foundation Stage, Phase 1 (Y1-3) and Phase 2 (Y4-6)).
- The school office can advise who the relevant staff member is.
- Phase Leaders are available to meet parents/guardians, by appointment, at the beginning and end of school days.

*We expect the majority of concerns will be resolved in this way (and not recorded as a formal complaint).
However, if not the following formal procedure will be followed*

Stage 3: Discussion with the Headteacher

- If you feel that stage 2 has not adequately addressed your concern, or, if for whatever reason, you do not think it appropriate to discuss your concern with the class teacher or phase leader, you can make an appointment to meet with the Headteacher. After meeting with you the Headteacher will decide on the appropriate course of action, for example:
 - to refer the matter back to the class teacher or phase leader for further discussion under the earlier Stages
 - to agree with you a resolution to your concern
 - to conduct an investigation into your concern before deciding the outcome
- In the event of an investigation, the Headteacher will write to you with the outcome once it has been concluded, which may be one of the following:
 - There is insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion so the complaint cannot be upheld;
 - The concern is not substantiated by the evidence;
 - The concern was substantiated in part or in full (some details may then be given of action the school may be taking to review procedures, but details of any disciplinary procedures will not be released).
 - The matter has been fully investigated and that appropriate procedures are being followed, which are strictly confidential (e.g. where staff disciplinary procedures are being followed).

Stage 4: Referral to the Chair of Governors

- If you feel that stage 3 has not adequately addressed your concern then you can write to the Chair of Governors c/o the school office using the formal complaint form attached to this document. The Chair of Governors will consider your complaint and then decide on the appropriate course of action, for example:
 - to meet with you
 - to conduct an investigation into the concern
 - to convene a panel of governors to formally hear your concern
- The Chair of Governors will write to you with the outcome of stage 4 once concluded.

Complaints concerning the Headteacher

- If you wish to make a complaint concerning the Headteacher, and it cannot be resolved via informal discussion with the Head, then you should write to the Chair of Governors in line with Stage 4 of this procedure.

Stage 5: Referral to the Governing Body Complaints Appeal Panel

- If you feel that your concern has not yet been adequately addressed, you may write to the Clerk to the Governing Body giving details of the complaint and asking that it is put before the appeal panel.

- The Chair, or if the Chair has been involved at any previous stage in the process, a nominated governor, will convene a GB complaints panel.
- The governors' appeal hearing is the last school-based stage of the complaints process and is not convened merely to rubber-stamp previous decisions.
- The aim of the hearing, which will be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant.
- However, it has to be recognised that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously.
- Individual complaints will not be heard by the whole GB at any stage, as this could compromise the impartiality of any panel set up for a disciplinary hearing against a member of staff following a serious complaint.
- The panel can:
 - dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
 - uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
 - decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
 - recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.
- The panel will notify all parties, in writing, of the final decision (including the reasons for the decision) and minutes of the hearing will be shared with all involved in the hearing.

Stage 6: Referral to the Local Authority or Department for Education (DfE)

- If you feel that the school has not adequately dealt with your complaint then you can refer the matter to the DfE or Local Authority.
- Making an external complaint should only happen after the previous stages above have been exhausted.

3. Vexatious Complaints

- If properly followed, a good complaints procedure will limit the number of complaints that become protracted. However, there will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied.
- If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the chair of governors is able to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed. If the complainant writes again on the same issue, then the correspondence may be recognised as vexatious and there will be no obligation on the part of the school to respond.
- Should a complainant raise an entirely new, separate complaint, it will be responded to in accordance with the complaints procedure - *it is not the complainant who is vexatious; it is the correspondence.*

Equality Impact Assessment

Under the Equality Act 2010 we have a duty not to discriminate against people on the basis of their age, disability, gender, gender identity, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation. We are committed to treating all pupils fairly and challenging negative attitudes about disability and accessibility and to developing a culture of awareness, tolerance and inclusion. This policy has been equality impact assessed and we believe that it is in line with the Equality Act 2010 as it is fair, it does not prioritise or disadvantage any member of the school community and it helps to promote equality and accessibility at our school. The curriculum is planned to be inclusive and meet the needs and interests of a full range of learners. Activities and resources will be differentiated and adult support used to ensure that children assess the curriculum and make the best possible progress.

Safeguarding Commitment

The school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Written and Reviewed: September 2014

Approved by Staff/Parents/Pupils/Governors:

Date of next review: September 2016